

Othniel Charles Marsh Archives

IPAR.001239



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2014

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History
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CALL NUMBER: IPAR.001239

CREATOR: Marsh, Othniel Charles, 1831-1899

TITLE: Othniel Charles Marsh Archives

DATES: 1831-1899

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet

LANGUAGE: In English.

SUMMARY: These are O C. Marsh Archives associated with the Division of Invertebrate Paleontology. This is only a small sample of his archives associated with Yale University.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ymp.ipar.001239>

Administrative Information

Cite As

Othniel Charles Marsh Archives, Invertebrate Paleontology, Yale Peabody Museum

Biographical Sketch

In 1866, Othniel Charles Marsh was appointed Professor of Paleontology at Yale, the first such position in North America. In 1867, he became curator of the Geological Cabinet at the new Peabody Museum, which was endowed by his uncle, the philanthropist George Peabody. Marsh brought with him 2.5 tons of books and specimens, the bulk of which were accumulated as a Yale College undergraduate and during a lengthy stay in Europe. This collection was the foundation of the vertebrate paleontology collection.

During a lifetime at Yale, Marsh amassed an impressive collection of vertebrate fossils. Although he and the Peabody Museum would ultimately become famous for their collection of dinosaurs from the American West which included type specimens of many of the best known dinosaurs - Marsh's earliest collections were from the Cretaceous of New Jersey. Under his leadership, the Yale College Scientific Expeditions of 1870-1873 obtained historically and scientifically important collections of fossil mammals, including some of the largest collections of uinatheres, titanotheres, fossil horses, and early primates in the United States. The expeditions also made important contributions to our knowledge of marine life from the Cretaceous, including mosasaurs, pterosaurs (most notably Pteranodon), and the toothed birds Ichthyornis

and Hesperornis. In addition, they assembled a sizable collection of fossil fishes from Eocene lake deposits in Wyoming.

After 1874, Marsh relied almost exclusively on ?professional? collectors, which included both local residents and collectors sent to the American West by Marsh. Marsh?s associates form a ?Who?s Who? of the history of vertebrate paleontology and geology: Erwin H. Barbour, David Baldwin, George Baur, Charles Emerson Beecher, Hugh Gibb, George Bird Grinnell, Oscar Harger, John Bell Hatcher, Arthur Lakes, Otto Meyer, Benjamin Mudge, O.A. Peterson, William Reed, George R. Wieland, and Samuel Wendell Williston.

According to his biographers, Schuchert and LeVene (1940), Marsh named 344 new species and 161 new genera of fossil vertebrates. His genera include Brontosaurus, Apatosaurus, Stegosaurus, Triceratops and Eohippus. His work and collections were praised by Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley as some of the most crucial evidence supporting the theory of evolution.

Description of the Material

Includes drawings and lithographs of Solnhofen annelids, specimen lists for Keokuk Limestone slabs from Crawfordsville, IN, locality information about the Turners Falls area, a list of correspondence held at the Sterling Library at Yale, and locality information for a Placenticerias specimen sent to Marsh by General John Gibbon.

Collection Contents

Series I: Specimen Information

Illustrations. Drawings and Lithographs of specimens.
001242

Specimen Lists.
001243

Series II: Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous Archives from O. C. Marsh in the collections of Invertebrate Paleontology including locality information and correspondence.

Correspondence.
001245

Locality Information.
001244

Series III: Locality Information

Locality information for specimens collected or received by O. C. Marsh

Locality information.
002430

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Geographic Names

Connecticut
USA

Genres / Formats

Correspondence
Maps
Photographs

Corporate Bodies

Yale Peabody Museum
Yale University